

Editorial Note

António Brandão Moniz (Director) and José Miquel Cabeças (Editor)

At the end of 2008 took place the external evaluation of the research centre organised by the Ministry of Science, Technology and High Education. It was only finalized in 2009. The results were made public, but IET asked for a re-evaluation process once the Foundation for Science and Technology persists on a specialized basis for the research centres evaluation. This means that an interdisciplinary centre have a high probability of no financial support from the Ministry. This has obviously consequences in the research policy in Portugal.

As was mentioned in the response to the evaluation panel of IET, they seem not to have understood the aim to develop an interdisciplinary centre at Universidade Nova de Lisboa. The panel considered that sociology is the dominant discipline at IET activity, and also this evaluation panel is formed only by economists. It was not considering the possibility of inter-disciplinary evaluation needs. But even that was not true and a quick look in the information about IET (<http://edirc.repec.org/data/ieunlpt.html#HoPEc>) on the RePEc repository system can easily prove that sociology is not the mainstream of research in this research centre. FCT-UNL is not a Universidade Nova de Lisboa faculty of economics, but is a research faculty of international level in the field of sciences and technology. There is a specific faculty in the field of economics (FE-UNL) in the same university, but none of the members of IET are working there. The same happens to the faculty of social sciences (FCSH-UNL) where other sociology research centres are organized. In fact IET is the only research centre at FCT-UNL in the field of enterprise and work sciences, which includes sociology and economics, and also management and ergonomics, as main disciplines.

The panel members also mentioned that the publications in Portuguese language written by the centre members "has almost no consistency and relevance". Clearly, such evaluation panel member could have a better knowledge about the research quality developed in Portugal in the field of economics and management. But that was not the case. Some other centres evaluated with negative classification had also presented some of highest quality research. In fact, most of the more relevant publications about Portuguese reality or by Portuguese social scientists are written in Portuguese. The Ministerial financing process showed clearly the scarcity of available financial funds for

research, and the evaluation procedures were not considering inter-disciplinary approaches, but only traditional disciplinary centres could receive such support. Although IET research centre is well positioned in the international research ¹ that did not deserved any relevance from the evaluation panel. Neither the fact it was managing large European research projects from 6th and 7th Framework programme, or that it is articulating activities with networks as the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, the European Foresight Monitoring Network and the German-speaking Network of "Technology Assessment". IET is also regularly publishing (in English) the journal "Enterprise and Work Innovation Studies" (see at ideas.repec.org or at Directory of Open Access Journals at www.doaj.org) and the "Working Papers Series" (idem). In fact, IET continued also the development of the "IET Working Papers Series" publication, the edition and distribution of the 4rd issue of the journal and the organisation of the 4rd Annual Meeting of Post-Graduation Research, as some of the main activities in 2009. None of these seemed to have any relevance. Nor even the fact that IET is organizing every year Meeting on Post-Graduation Research.

Did not deserve the panel attention the fact that this centre is the main research unit associated to the new doctorate programme on "Technology Assessment" at Universidade Nova de Lisboa. In spite all these surprising situations, IET will continue with their activities that are still unique in Portugal, and where no other centre has specific competencies. From this year IET will not have a reliable partnership with the national Foundation for Science and Technology. But that does not mean that it will be possible to continue the research collaboration with other international institutions of higher level of competency and quality in the fields of enterprise and work innovation, as well in the field of technology assessment.

The opening article of this 5th issue is developed by Diego Compagna, Stefan Derpmann and Kathrin Mauz all from the Institute for Sociology of the Duisburg-Essen University, in Germany. The article is about on the operation of autonomous mobile robot assistants in the environment of care facilities. As they mentions, the successful development of autonomous mobile robot assistants depends significantly on the well-balanced reconcilements of the technically possible and the socially desirable. It is based on empirical research of the WiMi-Care project and they verify the successful development of mobile robot assistants and automated guided vehicles to be applied for service functions in stationary care facilities for seniors. They also conclude that "in the near future robots could help to reduce the stress and burden of care work by taking on time-consuming, yet routine tasks, and freeing up health care workers to focus on higher-skilled aspects of care provision. For the patients with acute care needs, robots may lessen their dependence on care workers and contribute to their ability to lead more independent daily lives" (p. 22).

¹ IET was positioned in the top 32.9% of all research centres and institutes at the world level in December 2009.

A second article was also presented at the Portuguese-German Conference on Technology Assessment of Autonomous Robotics and establishes the following question: is Ambient Intelligence a truly human-centric paradigm in industry? The authors, Luís Ribeiro, José Barata and Pedro Barreira, are researchers at the Faculty of Sciences and Technology, Universidade Nova de Lisboa in the field of intelligent robotics. They start to say that "Ambient Intelligence aims to change the form of human-computer interaction, focusing on the user needs so they can interact in a more seamless way, with emphasis on greater user-friendliness. The idea of recognizing people and their context situation is not new and has been successfully applied with limitations, for instance, in the health and military sectors. However its appearance in the manufacturing industry has been elusive" (p. 25). The authors argue that a proactive and adaptable safety system may positively contribute to reduce the working conditions risks and, under the proper IT framework, contribute to render the shop floor a truly human centric paradigm where technology sever the human actor and not otherwise (p. 33). Both articles were also presented as papers in the mentioned conference.

Next comes an article on the well-known Portuguese researcher from the Technical University of Lisbon, Ilona Kovács, that wrote on "Work and citizenship: crises and alternatives". Her aim was "to refute some commonly held ideas which consider that ongoing changes in work and employment are inevitable and they have positive consequences at the social and individual level. It is subjacent on approach considering that there is no single striking trend while there are alternatives deserving discussion" (p. 37). As she mentions in her concluding remarks "within the framework of dominant thought there are no alternative futures that call for the reflection and participation of social actors with a view to making political options. Reflection limits itself to the best way of adapting" (p. 55). In spite of that she believes that there is an "high road" to economic development that "is based on improvements to efficiency and innovation" and that "fits within a different type of globalisation focusing on the reduction of inequality and economic, social and ecological imbalances" (p. 56).

The last article is an analysis of the effect of the anti-vibration gloves in the improvement of working conditions and the forearm efforts during tools operations. These issues were studied by José Miquel Cabeças (from FCT-UNL and member of the scientific board of IET), and Rute Jorge Milho also from FCT-UNL. They conclude that "anti-vibration gloves may increase the forearm fatigue in the posterior region of the forearm during operations with the mentioned tools" (p. 59) and that "most of the forearm problems related to the use of anti-vibration gloves are found in the extensor muscles side; these muscles must operate to keep (stabilize) the wrist in neutral position during tools use" (p. 65).

As usual in this journal, the last pages of this IET journal issue are dedicated to academic activities of IET members during this last year. It contains also information on integration activity in academic juries, and two conference report authored by António Brandão Moniz.